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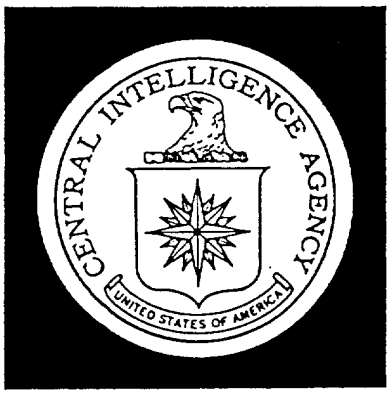

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Broadcasting in the Czechoslovak Crisis

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
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ER IM 68-118
September 1968

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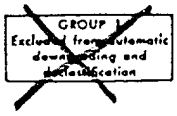

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
September 1968

Broadcasting in the Czechoslovak Crisis

Summary

Within a few hours of the movement of Soviet and other Warsaw Pact troops into Czechoslovakia on 21 August, a Free Czechoslovakia radio network began to broadcast news of the occupation to home and international audiences. Some studios and transmitters were seized, but efforts to silence the network were unsuccessful. The Czechs improvised temporary studios and apparently continued to use some of the high-power transmitters of the regular network until Dubcek's return from Moscow. During this time, jamming efforts mounted by the Soviet Union against Free Czechoslovakia and Western broadcasts were unsuccessful in blocking out news of the occupation in either Czechoslovakia or the USSR. The failure of the Soviet Union to deal quickly and decisively with Free Czechoslovakia broadcasts suggests that Soviet planners were counting on prompt formation of a cooperative Czech government and had failed to work out detailed contingency plans.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and was coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Foreign Broadcast Information Service.

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Czechoslovak Radio and Television

1. Czechoslovakia has one of the most highly developed radio and television broadcasting systems in the Communist world. The Czechoslovak radio network transmits programs on all broadcast bands to a reception base of at least four million radio sets -- more than one set per household, which is comparable to that of West European countries. Moreover, about 75 percent of the radio sets in Czechoslovakia are designed for multiple band reception which, together with Czechoslovakia's geographic location, enables its citizens to receive international broadcasts from all directions. At the same time, Czechoslovakia originates more than 200 hours per week of international broadcasts in nine languages. In the field of television, broadcasting is nationwide, and there are about 2.5 million television sets in use.

Emergence of Radio Free Czechoslovakia

2. Within a few hours of the movement of Soviet and other Warsaw Pact troops into their country, Czech radio workers began broadcasting news of the occupation both to their own countrymen and to foreign audiences. Prague TV showed Soviet troops occupying the city, and this program was carried into Western Europe by connection with Eurovision. At least three Radio Free Czechoslovakia programs were on the air in the early hours of the occupation, and an emergency radio network, apparently prearranged, began to take form shortly thereafter. By 23 August, Radio Free Czechoslovakia was transmitting regularly on long-wave (LW), medium-wave (MW), and short-wave (SW) to the Czech people and was beaming international broadcasts in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Russian. These broadcasts kept the Czech people and the world apprised of occupation developments, warned the populace against active resistance, and was a prime mover in organizing passive resistance, including several brief general strikes.

3. When regular program studios were seized by the occupation troops, the Czechs began originating radio programs in clandestine studios (probably private dwellings and mobile vans). Regional

programs from at least 15 different locations in Czechoslovakia were broadcast over the national network. This network arrangement continued until 29 August, when Free Czechoslovakia stations began to go off the air following the Moscow agreement and Dubcek's address to the Czech people. At least some TV transmissions were continued throughout the 21-29 August period, but broadcasting arrangements are not clear.

4. The clandestine broadcasts were remarkable not only because of their volume and survival but also because they apparently emanated from high-powered transmitters, such as are found only in the regular national network. The main evidence that high-powered transmitters were employed is the fact that most of the broadcasts could be monitored on frequencies normally used by the Czechoslovaks and heard clearly at points quite remote from Czechoslovakia.

5. The principal means of feeding clandestine broadcasts into high-powered transmitters probably was over the mainline communications network (wire, cable, or microwave radio relay lines). An alternative method could have been the use of low-powered transmitters for local broadcasts which were then retransmitted over the national network by the high-powered transmitters. This procedure may explain the press reports that clandestine radio broadcasts came from small transmitters that skipped from frequency to frequency.

The Soviet Response

6. After an initial period of confusion on their part, Soviet troops occupied regular Czechoslovak program studios and seized or destroyed several transmitters. But they were unable to stop the clandestine broadcasts. The failure to halt these broadcasts is an indication that the Soviets were counting on prompt formation of a cooperative Czechoslovak government and had failed to work out detailed contingency plans. The Soviet planners must have known the exact location of all high-powered Czechoslovak transmitters and could not have failed to understand the importance of controlling them. Yet Soviet military unit commanders

apparently were not provided with complete information on transmitter locations or with clear instructions to occupy them.

7. Poor Soviet planning is also apparent in the ineffectiveness of Soviet efforts to counter Free Czechoslovakia radio and TV broadcasts. The Soviets employed some of the transmitters they had seized to relay Radio Moscow programs in the Czech and Slovak languages. (As early as May 1968, Radio Moscow had more than doubled its direct broadcasts in Czech and Slovak.) In addition, the Soviets established several new broadcasts, probably from transmitters located in Poland and East Germany, to beam pro-Soviet programs to Czechoslovakia.

8. The Soviets initiated jamming against the Free Czechoslovakia radiocasts in the early days of the occupation. This effort consisted largely of broadcasting Radio *Mayak* on the same frequencies as those used by the Free Czechoslovakia transmitters. (*Mayak*, the USSR's second national program, is similar to a US music and news station.) This type of jamming, and to a lesser extent conventional noise jamming, also was employed within the USSR to overlay Czechoslovak broadcasts and those of the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty. The effectiveness of the Soviet jamming effort in Czechoslovakia and in the USSR was spotty. In both the USSR and Czechoslovakia, Western and Free Czechoslovakia broadcasts on some frequencies were effectively blocked, but others came through clearly. Listeners in Czechoslovakia and the USSR who wanted Free Czechoslovakia and Western news about the occupation were able to find it.

9. The Soviet jamming effort apparently suffered from the lack of prior planning and coordination. Jamming of Western broadcasts as a regular practice was discontinued by the USSR in 1963, and Eastern European countries, with the exception of Bulgaria, subsequently followed suit. The extensive Soviet network of noise jammers probably has been largely disbanded, and many of the transmitters probably have been converted to conventional broadcast use.